



Canadian Human Rights
Commission

Commission canadienne
des droits de la personne

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Dr. J.Z. Losos
Director General
Laboratory Centre for Disease Control
Health and Welfare Canada
Room 106, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0L2

Dear Dr. Losos:

I am writing because I thought you might be interested in hearing, second hand, about some of the concerns that have been expressed to the Commission most recently by persons suffering from environmental sensitivity.

One individual related to me an experience he had some three years ago with Health and Welfare medical officers who had been asked to examine him by his employer, a federal Department. According to the individual concerned, the medical expert who examined him gave him a battery of psychometric tests and, in addition, had him undergo handwriting analysis. He alleges that the Doctor concluded that his condition was based both on environmental sensitivities (50%) and somatization disorder (50%). The diagnosis of a somatization disorder was allegedly made on the basis of the handwriting analysis, and because the Doctor involved wanted "to maintain his credibility"; the psychometric testing showed no disorder. The same individual is now experiencing difficulty obtaining long-term disability benefits from his employer-sponsored Plan and has been referred to an immunologist for assessment.

Another case that has been brought to my attention reflects the administrative repercussions of what may appear to be discriminatory distinctions among different forms of disability. It concerns a nurse from Northern Ontario who believes that she is not treated in the same way as other persons with disabilities. She says she is denied the Northern Travel Grant because she visits a clinical ecologist and not an allergist. Further, her drug plan does not pay for evocative testing even though it would cover traditional allergy testing. She claims to have gone to a traditional allergist for fifteen years and, in her words, to have kept getting worse before trying, and benefiting from, the non-traditional approach.

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I raise these two cases with you because I think they typify the kind of complaint we hear quite frequently from people who suffer from environmental sensitivities; some seem to reflect insensitivity or lack of knowledge on the part of the medical profession, or the assumption that the disorder is psychosomatic in nature; others involve the failure to recognize certain treatment methods for medical insurance purposes.

I must also mention that a number of individuals who suffer from EHS are concerned that they have not been included in the meetings you have arranged between the clinical ecologist and allergist/immunologist. They feel that, as a matter of principle, the individuals who are most directly involved should also be a part of that proceeding. I wonder if it is too late at this point in time to see whether this can be done. If it could be arranged, I would suggest you contact Mr. Ed Lowans, President of the Human Ecology Foundation (519-941-6499). He is, in my opinion, the best choice as a representative of that particular disabled group.

Yours sincerely,

John Dwyer
Policy Advisor to the
Chief Commissioner